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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

Memorandum



THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM

Information as of 1600
25 July 1965

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HIGHLIGHTS

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I. The Military Situation in South Vietnam:
US and South Vietnamese forces destroyed 22 Viet Cong junks on 23 July, about 25 miles north of Qui Nhon (Para. 1). Viet Cong military activity continued to consist largely of harassing fire rather than large-scale attacks, although press reports indicate a government outpost ten miles south of Saigon was overrun on 24 July (Paras. 2-3).

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II. Political Developments in South Vietnam:
On 19 July in Chau Doc Province, some 2,000 persons rioted as a result of an alleged incident of police brutality (Para. 1). The formation of a new joint religious council which expects to be consulted on certain government policy matters was announced on 24 July (Para. 2).

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III. Military Developments in North Vietnam:

A US Air Force jet fighter was shot down on 24 July by a North Vietnamese surface-to-air missile, [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] US air strikes on 24 July hit ammunitions depots and an explosives plant (Paras. 7-9). Bad weather forced the cancellation of all air strikes scheduled for 25 July (Para. 10). [REDACTED]

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V. Communist Political Developments: A delegation from Ghana is scheduled to arrive in Hanoi on 26 July (Paras. 1-3). Hanoi and Peiping are following Western press reports of Secretary McNamara's conferences since his return from Saigon (Paras. 4-5). Communist China and the Soviet Union have reiterated their full support for North Vietnam over the week end (Paras. 6-7). Hanoi on 25 July announced the formation of its first military training course for foreign students (Paras. 8-9).

VI. Other Major Developments: A US Navy A6A and a US Air Force F-105 were downed over south-central Laos on 24 July, apparently by enemy ground fire (Para. 1).

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I. THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. American planes and ships in coordination with Vietnamese naval forces helped destroy 22 Viet Cong junks on 23 July, about 25 miles north of the city of Qui Nhon. Two of the Viet Cong junks, according to press reports, contained "camouflaged crates."

2. According to press reports, on 24 July Binh Chanh, a district capital some six miles south of Saigon, was hit by mortar fire; one civilian was reported killed and two wounded. A subsequent report by MACV indicates that only one round was dropped on the town. On the same day, in Gia Dinh Province, a government outpost approximately ten miles south of Saigon was reportedly overrun by the Viet Cong. The post was supposed to have been reoccupied by government forces, but no casualties have been reported from the area.

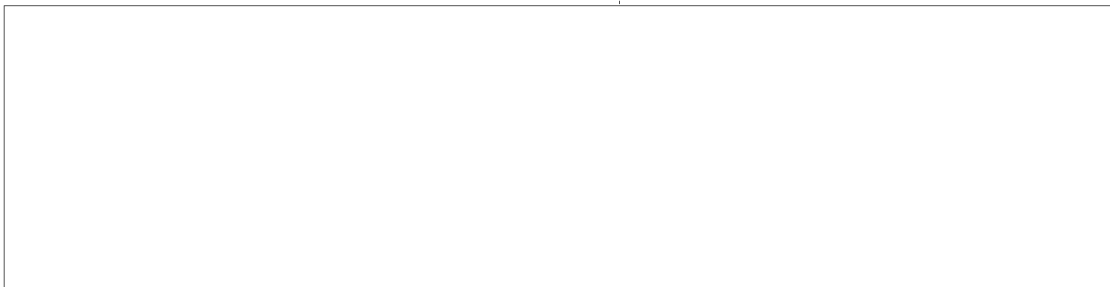
3. North of Saigon in the central highland province of Phu Bon the province capital, Cheo Reo, was harassed by mortar fire. This action resulted in the death of one civilian and the wounding of another. The Cheo Reo area was the scene of heavy fighting at the beginning of this month. Also in the central highlands region, the Vietnamese Special Forces outpost of Dak Sut was harassed by mortar fire, but no casualties were sustained by friendly forces.

4. Thirty-nine South Vietnamese youths are missing and feared drowned in the Saigon River, approximately 3 miles east of Saigon. The 39, part of a group of 300 youthful draftees, were being transported by water to a training camp in Phuoc Tuy Province. A demonstration against being drafted started on board the vessel and 50 reportedly jumped into the river. Eleven of the group who jumped overboard were rescued.

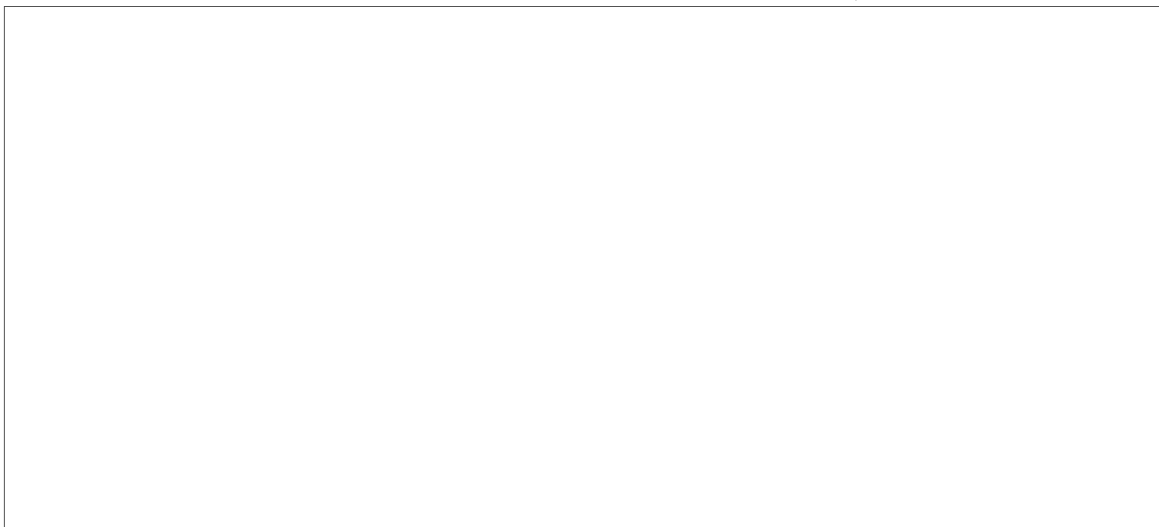
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7. Viet Cong - initiated actions during the period 22-23 July totaled 143, of which only 15 occurred during the reporting period, according to MACV. Communist military activity throughout the country was generally characterized by harassing fires placed on outposts, installations, or New Life Hamlets as well as sabotage activity against lines of communication. On 23 July the district town of Don Luan, in Phuoc Long Province, was hit by five rounds of 81-mm. mortar fire; no casualties were reported. A New Life Hamlet in Long Khanh Province was also hit by mortar shells without serious losses to the defenders. Two government outposts, located approximately seven miles west of Saigon in Gia Dinh Province, were harassed by the Viet Cong on 23 July.

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II. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN SOUTH VIETNAM

1. On 19 July, in Chau Doc Province, approximately 2,000 persons rioted, stormed a police station, burned files, and seized arms and ammunition, according to a national police official. The cause of the riot was alleged to be an instance of police brutality which resulted in the death of a villager. The police are also alleged to have extorted a large sum of money from the man before he was killed. A second riot ensued on 23 July, and the national police chief is reportedly sending high-ranking police officials to bring the situation under control.

2. Six national religious groups announced on 24 July the formation of a joint religious council, which expects to be consulted by the government on certain policy matters. The council, which in effect replaces a now defunct interfaith committee, is composed of representatives of Catholics, Protestants, Cao Dai, Hoa Hao, Bahai, and the minority General Buddhist Association. Conspicuously missing from the new committee are representatives of the most important Buddhist organization in South Vietnam, the Unified Buddhist Church.

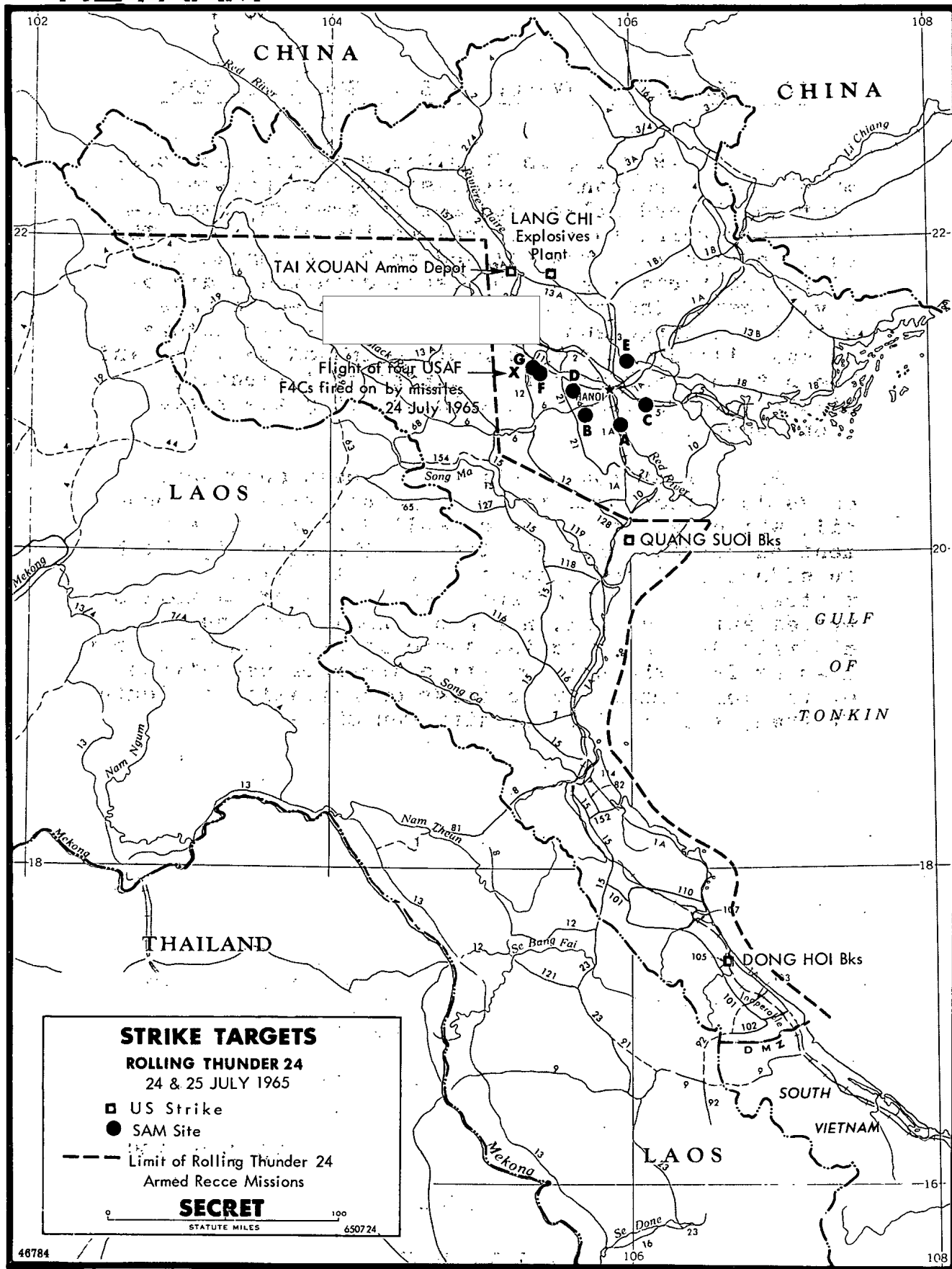
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7. On 24 July, USAF aircraft struck an explosives plant and an ammunition depot northwest of Hanoi. Pilots report two buildings destroyed and six damaged at the Lang Chi explosives plant and 19 buildings damaged at the Tai Xouan ammunition depot. Several secondary explosions were reported at the ammunition depot.

8. US Navy aircraft attacked the Quang Sui barracks near the 20th parallel, destroying or damaging approximately seven buildings. Pilots reported direct hits in an adjacent ammunition storage area with additional secondary explosions. A barracks near Dong Hoi was also struck by US Navy aircraft; three buildings were severely damaged and ten moderately damaged.

9. US aircraft also conducted several successful armed reconnaissance missions below the 20th parallel on 24 July. The runway at a new airfield under construction west of Thanh Hoa was cratered and three temporary buildings destroyed. Several other barracks areas and a highway bridge were heavily damaged.

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10. Bad weather throughout North Vietnam forced the cancellation of all ROLLING THUNDER strikes scheduled for 25 July. Most of the daylight armed recce missions were also canceled due to weather. On the night of 24-25 July, radar bombing missions were conducted against the Thanh Hoa bridge, the Dong Hoi barracks, and Tiger Island with undetermined results.

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V. COMMUNIST POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. A delegation from Ghana, led by Kwesi Armah, Ghana's ambassador to London, is scheduled to arrive in Hanoi on 26 July. Hanoi radio on 24 July carried the first public mention by North Vietnam of this delegation, making every effort to demonstrate that this delegation is on a personal mission from President Nkrumah and is in no way connected with the Commonwealth Peace Mission.

2. The Armah delegation, according to Hanoi, is on its way to present a letter from Nkrumah to Ho Chi Minh. The broadcast stated that Ho, in an exchange of letters with Nkrumah, has welcomed a "friendly visit to Vietnam" by the Ghanaian President "at an appropriate time."

3. The Hanoi broadcast emphasized that Ho had "unmasked" the US "deceptive peace line," in his letter to Nkrumah and "exposed the plot" of the Commonwealth Peace Mission. To further disassociate the Armah mission from the Commonwealth Peace Mission, Hanoi described him, not as the ambassador to Great Britain, but as Ghana's foreign trade minister.

4. Radio reporting out of Hanoi and Peiping reflect the wary eye both are keeping on developments within the US following Secretary McNamara's return from Saigon. Hanoi radio on 24 July took note of the "continuous" conferences between Secretary McNamara and top-level US Government officials since his return to Washington. Hanoi quoted Reuters as saying that these conferences may lead to a substantial increase in US forces in Vietnam. The Hanoi broadcast also noted the creation of what it called the "US Forces Joint Command in South Vietnam," a move it described as part of the plan to enlarge the war. The broadcast ended on the usual note of bravado with the assertion that any new threats by the US will only serve to heighten the determination of the Vietnamese to "smash" US plans.

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5. Peiping radio on 24 July noted that the US is "sharply" increasing its draft calls. The broadcast stated that draft calls for September are up some 14,000 over February. It then gave a rundown of US armed force strength, listing 2,653,861 men in the army, navy, air force, and marines.

6. Communist China's President Liu Shao-chi used the occasion of a 24 July state banquet for Burma's Ne Win, currently visiting Peiping, to reaffirm China's "unreserved" support for the Vietnamese. Liu warned that the US "is playing with the trick of peace talks" but asserted that the Vietnamese "will never be taken in." He quoted Ho Chi Minh's recent declaration that the Vietnamese "people" will fight "until final victory even if we have to go on fighting another five years, ten years, 20 years, or even longer."

7. Soviet Navy Day provided a platform for Soviet leaders to focus attention on the Vietnam crisis and to emphasize that, under the pressure of the current international situation, the USSR intends to keep up a high level of defense preparedness. Soviet Premier Kosygin in his 25 July address asserted that "concern for the strengthening of the defensive might of the country and the combat readiness of the armed forces" is the "paramount and most important duty" of the Soviet Union. Marshal Malinovsky took the same tack in his speech. Delivering a stern indictment of US policy in his 24 July speech at Sevastopol, Soviet presidium member Podgorny reiterated the theme that the USSR has rendered and "continues to render support to the fraternal DRV."

8. Hanoi on 25 July announced that it had formed its first military training course for all foreign students in Vietnam. These students will wear North Vietnamese Army uniforms, according to the Hanoi broadcast. Foreign embassies in Hanoi have agreed to this program, according to the Hanoi statement which singled out the Chinese, North Korean, Polish, Laotian, and Indonesian embassies for sending representatives to a mass meeting of the students.

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9. This marks the first step in Hanoi's long-threatened campaign to accept foreign volunteers in the fight to defend North Vietnam. Such an international student organization could be used as a cover for regular military personnel from the bloc and other countries friendly to Hanoi. For the present, however, it is probably largely designed as another propaganda forum to demonstrate wide support for North Vietnam.

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